DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 251 799 CS 007 852

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TITLE An Application of a Functional View of Language to Teacher Preparation.
PUB DATE 13 Apr 84
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English Spring Conference (3rd, Columbus, OH, April 12-14, 1984).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Communication; *Communication Skills; Discourse Analysis; Interpersonal Communication; Language Usage; *Preservice Teacher Education; Reading Instruction; *Student Teachers; *Teacher Effectiveness; *Teacher Student Relationship; Teaching Methods; Videotape Recordings

ABSTRACT

Noting that while student teachers may be well versed in theories of instruction, they frequently lack a particular type of communication competence for the classroom, this paper describes a project for training teachers by using videotapes of teacher/student interaction during reading lessons. The first part of the paper describes the three phases of the project: (1) presenting actual videotaped reading lessons of teachers from several classrooms to illustrate the basic language concepts encompassed by interaction; (2) analyzing interaction through studying videotapes and transcripts of a select sample of key segments from the reading lessons, focusing on how teachers and students communicate during the instructional component of a lesson; and (3) discussing the results of the student teachers' sequence-by-sequence analysis. The second portion of the paper presents the questions used to frame the analysis of each sequence of one of the videotaped segments. (HTH)

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ED251799

"An Application of a Functional View of Language to Teacher Preparation"

Paper Presented at
The National Council of Teachers of English Conference
Spring Conference
Columbus, Ohio
April 13, 1984

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Historically, teacher education programs for elementary education have emphasized foundations of education and methods and materials for teaching specific content areas (e.g. reading). However, they have offered limited training in the interactive processes of classroom settings. Occasionally, some courses include suggestions that teachers use language to accept feelings, praise or encourage pupils, accept or use pupils' ideas, ask questions, lecture or direct student behavior. Additionally, these courses have stressed that teachers' questions should be more concerned with stimulating thinking than with eliciting factual information and that a more balanced ratio should be maintained between teacher and student talk. However, to date, few courses examine how teachers and pupils communicate and interpret each other's intentions in face-to-face situations. As a result, student teachers, once placed in the field, experience a wide gap between that which they learned in coursework and the application of such information during the student teaching practicum.

Although student teachers may be well versed in theories of instruction, they frequently lack skills pertaining to classroom communication which requires a particular type of communicative competence. As a result of this need, we have envisioned the use of actual videotapes of classroom interaction as a means of bridging the gap and preparing pre-service teachers to understand and implement effective communicative strategies.

The teacher training technique presented herein ties together two themes; namely, the analysis of teacher-child interaction as a goal and videotaping as a technique for teacher preparation. Modern developments in videotaping technology

such as: the low cost, small size and light weight of the equipment, highly sensitive microphones, durability of cassettes, as well as the accessibility and compatibility of equipment have facilitated the use of this tool for storing and reproducing actual classroom exchange which in turn, can be utilized for diversified analytical purposes.

The aforementioned need for preparing teachers in the area of classroom interaction led us to conduct a project with a group of twenty students who had completed all of their coursework in an undergraduate teacher education program and were preparing for entering student teaching during the Fall 1984 semester. One of our basic assumptions was that interaction is complex and goes by too quickly for an untrained eye to grasp its intricacies, and that awareness of interaction enhances one's understanding of the learning-teaching process. Furthermore, video-taped instruction within the context of a classroom setting was viewed as an effective self-monitoring device for analyzing instructional strategies.

The project which was implemented for using video-taped reading lessons as a teacher training technique consisted of three phases which are described below.

Phase I took place during January and February of 1984. It had as its major goal the development of knowledge regarding how language is used in teacher-directed lessons and the development of a framework for analyzing classroom interaction in general. This phase presented students with actual video-taped lessons of teachers from several classrooms. Then, we used the tapes to illustrate the basic concepts encompassed by

interaction such as: directives, informatives and elicitations as these pertain specifically to directed reading lessons. The reaction on the part of the pre-service teachers was one of amazement regarding the subtleties of the communication process, the speed with which it occurs and the amount of work required to construct effective communication throughout a lesson. They expressed that prior to viewing the tapes, their perception was that interaction in the classroom was a spontaneous process which occurred as long as one had lesson plans outlining the step-by-step means of carrying out instruction and the appropriate curricular materials. The realization that more was entailed in interaction led the student teachers to sense the urgency of the "moment" in the face-to-face interaction inherent in classroom lessons.

Phase II of the project took place during March 1984. It centered on analyzing interaction through studying video-tapes and transcripts for a select sample of key segments from the reading lessons. During these sessions, the focus was on how teachers and pupils communicate during the instructional component of lessons. The procedures implemented in conducting Phase II were comprised of the following steps: (1) The group viewed and analyzed video-tapes for certain segments of interaction from the reading lessons (they had already seen the full video-tape of the lesson during the previous phase); (2) After showing the tape of the full segment, each elicitation sequence was studied. The pre-service teachers were guided only

insofar as stipulating the focus of analysis for that particular session; (3) Finally, student teachers discussed the results of their sequence-by-sequence analysis in more general terms as to what they learned about the communicative process through this activity.

Following are the questions used to frame the analysis of each sequence of one segment used in the discussion. This procedure occurs after the student teachers have viewed the video-tape of the entire reading lesson and the selected segment. The sample questions were:

(1) What do you think the teacher's intent was in this sequence?

They would then be asked to explain how they de-determined her intent.

(2) How do you think the children interpreted the teacher's elicitation in this sequence?

(3) Why do you think the children responded the way they did?

(4) What kind of feedback did the teacher provide the students with after their responses?

(5) How do you think the teacher could have initiated this elicitation differently?

The results of the pre-service teachers' analysis of the first sequence in one of the segments are presented here in order to illustrate how the discussion progressed during the first session of Phase II. The sequence from the transcript reads as follows:

Initiation - Teacher: "OK, LET'S START WITH YOU." [T looks at Student #13] "TELL ME ABOUT THE BEGINNING OF THE STORY."

Response - Student #13: "ah, the boy said that's a real lion."

Feedback - Teacher: "IS THAT WHAT HAPPENED AT THE BEGINNING?!

In analyzing the first question dealing with intent, the pre-service teachers thought the teacher wanted the children to tell her the first thing that happened in the story which was that they met two kids--Ricky and Bob who make believe they are hunting for a lion in the jungle. Their clue regarding the teacher's intent is contained in sequence number 6 in which the teacher elicits "What is the story about?" "Is is about two men, two girls...?" The children respond, "two kids" and the teacher builds upon that response in subsequent sequences.

The second question addressing the children's interpretation of the teacher's intent led the pre-service teachers to probe into whether the children felt the real lion was important because the teacher had stressed it throughout the story. They also questioned whether the response merely reflected the children's interest in the part dealing with the lion rather than with Ricky and Bob. Furthermore, they felt the child's answer "a real lion" seemed appropriate even though the teacher gave negative feedback for this response since it reflected the child's sense of what the story was about. This seemed to match the author's intent since the story was entitled "Fun with the Lion". The pre-service teachers felt the teacher utilized certain elicitations to accomplish her original objective of having students put the story in sequence back to the floor for negotiation.

The third question dealt with the teacher's feedback which was perceived to be negative through her use of intonation, "Is that what happened at the beginning?" They felt she meant the feedback as a cue to the children that they

had not answered in accordance with her expectations.

Finally, on the last question dealing with how the teacher could have handled the elicitation differently, the pre-service teachers suggested the use of more specific questions such as: "Who did the children meet at the beginning of this story?" or "What were Ricky and Bob going to do when the story began?". They also expressed that the teacher could have written the events she was looking for on the chalkboard out-of-sequence and had the children put them in order as a form of review.

Subsequent to the analysis of this segment, a general discussion ensued with the group. Some of the main points were that they thought that although the teacher was able to get her objectives across by the end of the segment, valuable time was lost and several obstacles to communication occurred. The pre-service teachers suggested this may have been because the children had difficulties recalling the story and could not, therefore, effectively accomplish the sequencing activity expected by the teacher. The group also felt that since the students had struggled with reading and comprehending what they read during the entire lesson, a review would have enabled them to accomplish the sequencing task or at least realize the teacher's intent for them to sequence. The teacher did acknowledge the children's difficulty and told them they could look at their pictures to help them remember what happened in the story.

After the group completed this task collectively with several transcribed segments, they were divided into small groups and assigned different segments which they were to analyze utilizing the same techniques and then share with the whole group. This was done to allow for diversity in the

segments used and allow for greater depth of analysis.

The second phase of the project described herein proved enlightening because the pre-service teachers were able to empathize with both the children's and teacher's perspectives in their analysis. They were struck by how hard the teacher and children worked to complete the segment of interaction through the elicitation acts described previously. The student teachers were also intrigued by the way in which the teacher was able to work through the segment to successful completion in spite of the difficulties encountered between her intent and the children's interpretation thereof.

From their analysis of Segment A, the pre-service teachers acquired an understanding of the complexity and mutual nature of interaction within the context of reading lessons. Some of the points they stressed in terms of what they gained from this experience included:

(1) How much both the teacher and students listen to each other, attempt to understand the intent, try to follow each other's line of thinking and move smoothly through the communicative process.

(2) How much more difficult it is to repair communication than to construct it initially.

(3) How students and teacher build on each other's responses as they collectively negotiate the construction of the exchange.

(4) How concepts are often learned in blocks of several elicitation sequences.

Phase II for purposes of this presentation consisted of three 40 minute sessions with the pre-service teachers and focussed solely on one type of reading lesson; namely, the directed reading activity (DRA) using a basal reader. Instructional strategies for language arts, as well as other content areas and general strategies for lesson/classroom

management were the focal points of other sessions. Upon completion of the analysis and discussion of specific segments of interaction for various purposes, Phase III would begin.

This phase entails the actual video-taping of classroom lessons conducted by pre-service teachers during their practicum. The purpose of these taping sessions is to enable student teachers to analyze, under supervision, their own communicative strategies through viewing the classroom lessons taught by themselves. Such an analysis would require the application of skills acquired during the first two phases. The third phase of this project has not yet been implemented but will be piloted during the Fall 1984 semester with five student teachers who participated in the first two phases of the project.

In concluding, as my colleague mentioned at the beginning of her presentation in which she presented the theory underlying the study of language use in the classroom and a framework for viewing instructor-child communication in teacher-led reading lessons, the ideas contained herein require further development. Since the project has not been completed, we cannot make a definitive statement about the merits of this approach for imparting communicative skills to pre-service teachers for their use in classroom interaction. Their enthusiastic response and feedback, together with our observation of their growth and adeptness in detecting subtle communicative strategies are encouraging. We plan to continue our inquiry into the potential applications of video-taping lessons as a viable technique informed by interaction/language theory and useful of teacher preparation.